TTCI has filed a petition in the Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the company. The case is now pending in the Court. There is no decision to give away all the sick tea gardens of TTCI to Balmer Lawrie.

Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement

19. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement signed in December, 1998 and which was to come into force from 1st March, 1999, is yet to be implemented;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to resolve the difficulties in the implementation of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Agreement envisaged exchange of lists between the two sides regarding items to be covered under tariff reductions as well as items on which on tariff preferences would be available. The lists were accordingly exchanged in February, 1999. However, the Sri Lankan side expressed reservations regarding inclusion of some items in India's negative list. India has also requested Sri Lanka to delete some items of its export interest from Sri Lanka's negative list. There have been further discussions to resolve the differences.

Growth Centres in Gujarat

20. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there are backward districts in Gujarat and Kutch is one of them;

(b) whether out of seventy growth centres proposed to be developed sixty-six centres have been approved and not a single growth centre has been allotted to Gujarat; and

(c) whether there is any proposal to open a growth centre in remote area of the Kutch district?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) The Ministry of Finance vide notification No. S.O. 714 (E) dated 7.10.97 has notified a list of industrially backward districts, recently, for purposes of fiscal reliefs to units situated in these districts. In Gujarat these are the districts of the Dangs, Banaskantha and Sabarkantha. Kutch District is not so notified.

(b) and (c) No Sir, under the Growth Centre Scheme, 1988, out of the approved Growth Centres, three growth centres namely Vagra, Gandhidham and Palanpur have been approved for Gujarat State. The growth centre located at Gandhidham is in Kutch district.

Balance of Trade for Current Year

21. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the export target fixed for the financial year 1999-2000 and whether the proportionate targets have been achieved during the first six months;

(b) if so, what are the export earnings and how they compare with anticipated outgo of foreign exchange on our import requirements; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken so that India has favourable balance of trade?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) The export target fixed for the financial year 1999-2000 is US $ 37400 million excluding software. As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistic provisional data, the value of exports during the first six months i.e. April-September, 1999-2000 is US$ 17461 million, while the value of imports during the period is US $ 22474 million.

(c) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports such as reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.